1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

556 riage connections by joining together families of approximately
[581] equal wealth and that it is an important source of power. There is a strong tendency for village officers and other members of
[622] founding lineages to be richer than later immigrants; hence
• [624] wealth tends to be joined with hereditary office. In the informal councils which precede formal deliberations over disputes or policy, men listen more attentively to the statements of the wealthy. This attentiveness is a sign of respect, but also of recognition of the wealthy individual's ability to give or withhold favors; sometimes there is also the informal bribery of generous hospitality, and on occasion, outright bribes in return for support. Wealth differences can result in special likenesses and differences within Santal society, and even ceremonies graded in cost, as will be discussed later.

554 It would normally go without saying that those who hold
182 positions of special power and prestige have a special interest in the preservation of traditional solidarity and provide a natural source of endogenous pressure for the maintenance of traditional structure. It receives mention here only because it will soon be shown that other circumstances make these same privileged Santal especially subject to tribally disintegrative centrifugal pressures.

[P. 26 is blank]

• 624

/For the role of Jog Manjhi, Jog Paranik and Godet in various customs, passim, see category 116, pp. 23-79; 104-106; 137-159; 176, 185./

2; Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

782 776 them: Please, Lords, the promise you gave is a promise, your promise is a golden promise, ours is a skin promise, please give us a hand-given promise, before you leave. A promise given is a promise, a promise of luck and good fortune, may they never become false and worthless. Thereupon the bongas, one after the other, give to the priest the rice they have in their hand. The village people then say: Please, Lords, it has been a long time, and it is very late, the horses, the umbrellas in the Siñ forest, the Man forest[6], dig and fill their stomach with hasa vegetables, with ḍimbu vegetables[7]. Then the possessed men regain consciousness. The rice mentioned the men who were possessed take. And having reached the village they enter the headman's house, where they give them food. This is the way in which the bongas are brought up in the sacred grove.

d. The assistants of the village headman.

622 624 Thereupon all the men come together at the Mṇñjhi (the village headman). He has brewed beer. Now as he deems the men in the village fit, in accordance with this he chooses some to assist him in the village; he appoints them to positions: You become our Paranik, you become our Goḍet. And if there are sufficient people, he will at the same time also appoint a Jog Mṇñjhi and a Jog Paranik. And one for whom it is possible to offer his own blood, he will appoint to be Kuḍam Naoko. He gives them beer; they drink and then gradually go home.

622 The Mṇñjhi is the head of the village people. All people in the village will have to follow his lead. In ordering and inviting, in calling and restraining, at the namegiving, at the initiating festivals, at marriages, when hunting and chasing, at feasts and festivals, at religious instruction and worship, in connexion with rice and curry, with beer and liquor, with spirits and mountain spirits, in quarrelling and squabbling, in strife and dispute, when there is hunger and thirst, with landlords and money-lenders, when crime and misdeeds occur, in connexion with thefts and stealing, with medicine and witchcraft, with wenches and strumpets, when there is fighting and killing, murder and wickedness, in grief and sorrow, in calamities and dangers, in illness and pain, at dying and falling away, at ceremonies in connexion with death and decease, at cremation and the final funeral ceremonies: in connexion with all this the Mṇñjhi has the responsibility.

624 The Paranik is the headman's assistant, like a prime minister, and when there is no Mṇñjhi, the Paranik rules the village. If the headman should run away, and there are no sons or male relatives of his, the Paranik becomes Mṇñjhi. Or if the Mṇñjhi dies without having sons, and there also are no male relatives of his in the village, then also the Paranik becomes Mṇñjhi.

[131] [137]

[6] The Siñ and Man forests seem to have reference to the Singbhum and Manbhum districts to the South-west of the Santal Parganas. Santals have been and are still living in these districts. [7] Hasa is a Basella; ḍimbu a creeper.

2: Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

624 882

The Jog Mañjhi is the one in charge of the young men and girls. He has to see to it that no shamelessness shall occur in the village. If anything of this kind occurs and he does not find it out, the village people will tie him with a piece of wood and a halter to a post in the headman's cattle-shed and thrash him, and they will also fine him.

But if the Jog Mañjhi finds out the misbehaviour of any young man and girl, he will seize the young man and give him into the charge of the village council. If the young man agrees in a council meeting to keep the girl as his wife, they will only fine the father of the young man; but if the young man does not assent to marry, the Jog Mañjhi will thrash him in the presence of the village council, so that his skin is torn, and they will fine his father heavily. Some people become utter paupers by again and again paying fines for a son.

624 684 882

During the Sohrae all the young men and girls stay for five days in the house of the Jog Mañjhi, and eat and drink with him, and they also sleep in his house. And if anything should happen, he will have the responsibility.

At the namegiving and social initiating ceremonies and in everything in connexion with marriages the Jog Mañjhi is to the front. And in connexion with the attendance at the worship of the spirits and at religious festivals he is the leader. The Jog Mañjhi gets more beer to drink than all others of the village people.

624

Formerly the Jog Mañjhis were keeping the young men and girls of the village in very strict order; but nowadays they are very careless. The village girls give them much beer to drink; in this way they treat them with their medicine in order that even if the Jog Mañjhi gets to know something about them he may not reveal it, or, in case they should go astray anyhow, there may not be inflicted too heavy a punishment. The young men also will treat the Jog Mañjhi, when they get an opportunity; and they will also tell him their respective sins. At such a time the Jog Mañjhi will say to them: Walk sensibly here with us; you will have to support them; otherwise I shall flog you white.

624 882

The Jog Paranik is the assistant of the Jog Mañjhi, and when there is no Jog Mañjhi there, he will do the Jog Mañjhi's work.

The Goḍet, by the headman's order, calls the village people together to council meetings. When the spirits are worshipped, he collects the fowls for sacrifice in the village, and if any bundles or the like come to be forwarded, he carries them to the next village. They call the Goḍet the Big Mañjhi, because his word is more prevalent in the village, he is like the police. The ancestors have said, it is told, that Marak buru was the Goḍet of Ṭhakur. The Goḍets are very impetous; they are also very greedy. In many places they have robbed the Mañjhi of his position; they have also become Parganas even. If they become Mañjhi or Pargana, they will not judge righteously; they act covetously. If they Paranik of a village becomes Mañjhi, the Goḍet by right becomes Paranik.

624

The Naeke (the village priest) sacrifices to the village bongas, this is his only work.

793

3t Mukherjee O. Y-4, 8 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

121 62 64 ment and the customary laws that regulate the society to illustrate our observations.

The Limbs of Law

622 (1) In villages

(i) Headman:—

The social authority in the Santal villages is exercised ordinarily by the headman, called Mañjhi, with a batch of village officials to assist him. In [651] Mayurbhanj, he is generally called the Pròdhan, an office belonging to the rural revenue-collector, who need not always be the headman (Mañjhi). Accor- [427] ding to custom he is also the *Ijardar* under a land-holder. His function is to collect rents and to [423] allot land amongst the tenants. His office is not [585] altogether honorary, for he holds free of rent parcels of *màn*[1] land and receives a fee of Re. 1 at each Santal marriage, presenting in turn a pot of rice-beer.

624 [423] (ii) *Paranik*:—He is the assistant headman also enjoying the privilege of rent-free land and having under him a third official, *Jòg-Paranik*.

(iii) *Jòg-Mañjhi*:—This interesting office belongs to a Santal for arranging tribal feasts and carousals of rice-beer, when he acts as a censor of village morals, and is called upon to exercise his

1. Land held by village officials rent-free.

31 Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

wit and sometimes his force, to control the tipsy folk.

(iv) *Godet*:—He is a sort of an usher and bearer-in-general at the beck and call of the headman and his assistants, holding like them rent-free lands as the privilege of his office.

(v) *Naeke* and *Cudam Naeke*: —Added to the fore-going, the ecclesiastical functions of the tribe are exercised by the *Naeke* (village-priest) and his assistant, whose special function is to propitiate the hill-spirits.

(2) Inter-village organization:—

The rural units, on their turn, are federated into a number of larger groups, each under the supervision (as we saw in Mayurbhanj) of a Desh-Pròdhan, whose special function, we shall soon notice.

On the top of this, these federal units are co-ordinated under the superintendence of a Santal over-chief, called *Pargana* having a varying area of the country under his jurisdiction, over which according to immemorial custom, he is the supreme head.

The special function of these tribal offices will be explained in detail in course of this chapter; and it is time that we should deal with the village assembly, a wonderful relic of ancient India embedded in the Santal tribal jurisprudence, serving

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

121 623 as the right hand of the headman in the exercise of his office.

Village-assembly and its powers and functions

622 623 Social authority in village is exercised by the Headman, but always in consultation with the "Mònṛèn hòṛ" (*panchayet*) who were originally five in number. At present the number is not so fixed. It comprises the village elders representing all the households. When any question for decision comes, the Headman or in his absence the *Paranik*, receives the complaint. If the matter is simple [624] enough, it is decided immediately by the Headman with the help of the "Mònṛèn hòṛ," the members of whom are summoned by the village official, *gòḍet*. If the case involves knotty questions of 622 623 692 tribal law, a date is fixed for decision when the parties adduce oral evidence and after due consideration, judgment is pronounced by the Headman.

To take a concrete case, supposing a man has been seriously wounded by another man's buffalo. In such a case tribal laws require the accused to pay a money compensation to the complainant. These judgments are bound to be obeyed and breaches are rare. After the judgment, there is a custom of a money payment being made to the judges by the accused, to be spent by them in feasts and drinks. In some areas, as in the *sadar* sub-division of Mayur-

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
AW42 Santal AW42

881 783 of the male-child to all the privileges of the community life of the tribe. It is relevant to add [582] [764] that marriage is not permitted to any one who has not gone through the ceremony and should one die (without going through the ritual) his dead-body cannot be cremated nor are his bones thrown into the river, the most important step in a Santal funeral. It is, however, frequently seen that the father of several children performs the *Caco-chatiar* ceremony of all of them together.

As an initial step, *Iang hàṇḍia*, is prepared in the early morning. The villagers procure oil and [622] [624] [793] turmeric. The Headman and *Paranik* drink rice-beer (*hàṇḍia*) and send for the villagers. The women then rub oil and turmeric on the bodies of the *Nacke* (village-priest) and their assistants and this is done to all in a customary order of precedence from the village-officials down to the villagers. Rice-beer is served. The Santals dance and sing.

[538] Then comes the turn of an old man of the village, a *Guru*, the repository of Santal lores to recite the tribal story of the creation of the world and the wanderings of the Santal (already narrated in the 1st. Chapter, Santal Genesis and Migration) ancestors till they came to their present habitat.

It is then emphasised that all the impurities of the male-child have been purged away and by participating in the drinking bout of *hàṇḍia*, they

3t Mukherjea O, Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42
MAYURBHANJ

pestilence and epidemics affecting the Santals may be got rid of; and they reply in their hypnotic spell, suggesting ways out of the problems. On the conclusion the village-priest asks the Santals impersonating the deities to leave the grove.

On the morning of the second day, called *Sardi*, the *Godet* collects rice and chicken from all the houses. If a dance is decided upon, men and women go to the *Jahérthan* (Holy Grove), dancing and singing all the way with cymbal and kettle-drum accompaniments with the *Nacke* (priest) at the head, carrying the things procured by him on the previous day together with a pot of rice-beer. Closely following the priest, goes a bachelor youth with an earthen pitcher. Thus they reach the Holy Grove and clean the spot with cow-dung. Now the priest reaps some paddy from a field he chooses, and offers them with the prayers we have noted while describing *Janthar* festival in the other Santal areas. Fowls are sacrificed to the five gods, and the Boundary deity is propitiated by the priest at a separate place with offerings of rice-beer. All these over, the women return home. Men stay on and prepare the tribal dinner which they eat by the afternoon. The priest himself cooks near the shrine of Jahèr era. He offers the meal to the five deities of the grove and eats the lot himself.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

796 will their women wear them in their hair. As distinguished from the *Sohrae*, the Harvest Home, which is a trifle Bacchanalian, this festival is purer in its observances.

796 783 778 The festival begins with a day of purification called *Um*, when the young men of the village assemble at the *Jahèrthan*, (the Holy-Grove) in the village, and build two huts. One of these huts is [706] reserved for the Santal deity, called Gosane era, the other is meant to be jointly shared by Jahèr era, the presiding deity of the grove, "Monṛènko", (the "Five", meaning the five presiding gods) and Maraṅ Buru, the chief presiding deity. The shrines thus built are then purified with cow-dung by the priest. All the young men of the village then bathe and purify themselves.

796 [793] [783] In the meantime, the *Naeke* (priest) cleanses a winnowing fan, a basket, a bow and arrow, a pick-axe, a broom-stick, a holy gong and a hunting-horn and daub them with oil and *mithi* (a kind of spice).

• [624] The evening comes. In the meantime, the *Godet*, the orderly of the village Headman, has presented him (the priest) with three fowls. Three [787] young men now advance towards the priest's house, shaking their heads in a trance and impersonating Jahèr era, Maraṅ Buru and Gosane era respectively. Jahèr era then enters the priest's hut, puts on the bracelet, and putting the basket on his head, takes

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42
MAYURBHANJ

This interesting flower-festival is celebrated in Mayurbhanj under the name of "*Salui puja*", which also means a '*sal*-blossom festival'. But during our investigations, we observed certain differences from the customs of the Santal Parganas, we have noted just now. [796] [184]

In the first place, the *Godet* does not take three fowls to the priest on the evening of the first day at Mayurbhanj, but, we understand, the latter keeps them tied in his own house. Secondly, as regards the actor-deities, the Mayurbhanj Santals impersonate five of them and not three as in the Santal Parganas. The two additional ones are Maraṅ Mañjhi Haṛam and Hudiñ Mañjhi Haṛam. Thirdly, on the conclusion of the second day, the festival is not carried on to a third. But a general hunt called *Baba Baske Sendra* is arranged, when a leg of the animals hunted, is presented to the Headman, who in turn supplies a pot of *hàndia* (rice-beer) to the hunters. Should no game be shot, the tribe will not rest content, for, they must kill a fowl even by force from the priest's house and make the ceremonial present to the Headman. At night, the tribe assemble near the priest's house, and unloose the string of the bow carried to the Holy Grove. The function concludes with a general drink of rice-beer at the priest's expense. [624] [793] [224]

4; Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

778 the last is a Mowah tree; on its foot a stone representing the deity *Gosain Era* is kept. This is the most important one and is known as Lady of the Grove.

296 246 In the Santal villages there is a succession of festivals throughout the year, nearly all connected with agricultural operations. The chief of these is the *Sohrae* or *Banda parab* or the harvest festival, celebrated in the Bengali month Pous (i.e., at the beginning of the month of January) after the rice crop of the year has been harvested. This festival generally lasts for five days. Previously there was no fixed date, villagers of one locality performing this festival one day, others performing on some other day. But now-a-days the [178] [211] Deputy Commissioner of the Santal Parganas fixes the date for this festival, and this date is proclaimed by a man with a *sal* branch in his hand in every *hat*. Before this *parab*, Santal women buy large earthen vessels and replace old ones which they bought in the previous year. When the day has been fixed all houses prepare "handia" (rice beer) and people invite their relatives. [793] [784] [834] [624] The night before the festival commences, the *Naiks* is religiously-abstinent for before any sacrifice the sacrificer must not have relations with a woman and should sleep on the ground on a mat. At day break the *goddet* goes round and collects sacrificial fowls from every house. In the middle of the forenoon the [793] [782] *Naiks* goes near a tank together with some of the village people, the *goddet* taking the fowls with him. The *Naiks* bathes and then sacrifices the fowls to the different *bongas* after which the villagers cook the fowls with rice and eat them, and also drink rice beer. After this the villagers go to *Kulimucha* (i.e.,

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

796 241 tied and vermilion with mustard oil painted. Friends come and go visiting one another, all (both male and female) more or less drunk and wild with excitement. [624] After all is over, the young people drink and eat in the house of the *jog-manjhi*.

[786] The other two days are for nothing but to enjoy life, merry-making going on in full swing with full sex license. For the five days and nights during which the festival lasts the Santals indulge in a veritable saturnalia giving themselves up to dancing, eating, drinking, singing and sexual license. Although this license does not allow adultery, nor does it sanction intercourse between persons of the same sept, yet if the latter offence is committed it is punished less severely than at other times.

796 **Sakrat Festival.** After this another festival known as *Sakrat* takes place on the last day of the month of [177] [226] Pous (December and January). This is an imitation of the Hindu *Pous Sankranti* festival. The Santals (only males) go out fishing to the streamlet a day before the actual festival. From the morning of that day the women are busy preparing cakes of parched rice. [262] The men folk eat curd and parched rice (chura) and go out for hunting in the morning. The cakes are first offered to the ancestors and then eaten. In the after- [526] [624] noon the *Jogmanjhi* collects all the adult males of the village in an adjoining field for archery and other sports. After that in the evening they dance and sing, drink rice beer and spend the day in various kinds of [262] amusements. On the third day they go out to the fair or market (*hut*) after eating a preparation of rice and dal boiled together.

4; Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

Santal Administrative Officer.

Manjhi (Headman) : The basis of the Santal communal system is the village. Santals will never settle alone in an uncultivated area ; they go there in a body and settle with a leader and his assistants. The leader is known as *Manjhi* (headman), being chosen by the village people to administer the rights, rules and ceremonies of the Santal village community. No public sacrifice, no festival, no ceremony such as marriage can properly be done without the *Manjhi* taking the lead or initiative. The *Manjhi* is the representative of the village both in external and internal affairs. He also collects rents from the villagers. If the headman of a Santal village be other than a Santal (such as Kumar or Bauri) which sometimes happens, the Santals will have for themselves an official called *Handi Manjhi* who performs all the duties of the Santal village except collecting rent and other work demanded by the Government.

Assistant to the Headman-Paramanik Jogmanjhi : There are two assistants to the *Manjhi*, one is *Paramanik* and the other is the *Jogmanjhi*. The *Paramanik* is the principal assistant and representative of the *Manjhi* by whom he is chosen. If the *Manjhi* dies without any male issue or brothers then the *Paramanik* will get the office. In his (*Manjhi's*) social functions the *Manjhi* is assisted by the *Jogmanjhi*. His duty to prevent sexual intercourse in the same sept and also with a *diku* (non-Santal). If a girl becomes pregnant the *Jogmanjhi* has to find out who the culprit is. If he does not, the villagers tie him with the rope used for tying a buffalo to a pole in the cowshed of the *Manjhi* and scold him and fine him.

4; Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

624 and scold him and fine him. At the time of *Sohrae parab* all the villagers, young and old, male and female, drink handi (rice beer). Singing, dancing and other entertainments go on without restriction for five days and nights and at these times the boys and girls remain in charge of the Jogmanjhi. At the birth of a child and at marriages he is in charge of those ceremonies, and when the village youths attend a night festival he is in charge of them. Formerly he had a very important position though now gradually he is losing all authority; but the young people still use him as a safe repository of their secrets. The *Jogmanjhi* has an assistant called *Jog-Paramanik* who officiates when he is absent.

Village Beadle—Goddet (Goralt-Risley): Next in rank is the *Goddet*, an orderly or peon of the headman of the village, who calls the villagers together at his command and also collects sacrificial fowl for the village sacrifices. Whenever any foreigner comes in the village and enquires about the headman, the *Goddet* at once runs and informs him. (One morning I went to a village at Katikund within Dumka Sub-division. I asked the villager where the headman of the village was. The *Goddet* said he was in the agricultural field and at once ran to call him. He then came back with the headman to me). The Santals call the *Goddet Marang, Manjhi* i.e., great chief, and there are many instances of *Goddets* having ousted a *Manjhi* or even a *Parganait*. If a *Paramanik* gets the office of *Manjhi* it is considered proper that the *Goddet* should become *Paramanik*.

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

622
634
666 Custom has made these positions hereditary and there is a formal election system. The eldest member in each house of the village has a vote. After election the headman's appointment is confirmed by the Sub-divisional officer and the Deputy Commissioner of that Division, and the *Desh Manjhi's* appointment is confirmed by the Sub-divisional Officer only.

221
622
624 **Federal Council and The First Court of Appeal**
The Panchayat and Kulidrup

In the month of Magh (January and February) the village people gather together after a sacrifice. The headman of the village, taking the lead, resigns his post to the village people; all the other officials of the village also resign their posts one after another

634 **Panchayat**: In each *bunglow* there are two councils, upper and lower, like the modern Council House and Assembly of India. The upper is known as *Panchayat* in which the *Parganait* of the *bunglow* presides and the headman of all the villages of the *bunglow* become members of the *Panchayat*. Affairs of a weighty nature have to be decided in the council.

623
634 **Kulidrup**: The lower assembly is known as *Kulidrup* in which the eldest member of each house represents the assembly and the headman of the village presides. The indigenous officials of the village described above are ex-officio members of the *Kulidrup* and every village has a place for holding the council before the house of the headman of the village which is known as *Manjhisthan*. All petty disputes, both of a civil and

St Culshaw M-S (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

of great prestige, it is true of nearly all the village headmen that their whole bearing reveals a sense of dignity, and the exercise of their responsibilities has developed a practical wisdom in dealing with men and affairs that is not to be despised. It is unfortunate that the trend of policy under the British Government (except in the Santal Parganas district) has done much to undermine the authority of the headman, firstly through the development of a highly organized and centralized system of justice. When the aggrieved party in a dispute between Santals is able to seek redress in the distant district courts he is under a strong temptation to ignore the findings of the informal village and tribal councils. The temptation is all the stronger when the Hindu law administered by the court differs from Santal customary law, as it does in some important particulars. Secondly, the organs of local self-government which have been fostered in Bengal take no account of the Santal village system. It is true that some effort is made to secure representation of Santal interests by a system of nomination, but local influence has passed largely into the hands of the landlords. The government is aware of some of the disabilities under which Santals live, and since the passing of the Government of India Act, 1935, "Special Officers" have been appointed in several districts. It is their duty to watch over the interests of the Santals, but the success of their work depends largely on their own initiative, a factor which varies from one individual to another. In a few cases where Santal headmen have maintained their position in relation to dealings with non-Santals and with government, it is because they have secured some education and have been able to compete on more equal terms with their neighbours.

None of the other village officials compare with the headman for prestige. There is often a deputy headman, the *parunik*, who works as an adviser, but his main reason for existence is to function for the headman when the latter may be ill or away on family affairs, and he does not occupy a prominent place at other times. Many villages at the present day omit to appoint one. Next in importance comes the *jogmanjhi*, who is still found in every village. It is difficult to define his functions in a phrase; he is a kind of "censor of morals". As such he is the guardian of the morals of the young men in the village, and his wife exercises oversight of the morals of the young women. Unlike many of the tribes to whom they are closely related, the Santals have no dormitory system for the young people of the village. They have no memory of ever having possessed

St Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

They have no memory of ever having possessed the institution, but a snatch of song once heard suggests that they did at some period abandon it. In a *Sohrae* song occur the words

> The young girls are sleeping in the girls' house,
> The young men are sleeping in the young men's cowshed.[1]

If, as seems likely, they once had such an institution, it is probable that the *jogmañjhi* and his wife were in charge. At some festivals the young men sleep at the house of the *jog mañjhi*, and at the time of the *Sohrae* they go to him at the beginning of the festival and ask him in formal language to turn a blind eye to any of the faults they commit during that time. He is also called in to investigate allegations of immoral behaviour. The appointment is for life and it is hereditary, like that of the headman. In every village there are also two priests, who are responsible for maintaining right relations with the unseen world, but it will be more convenient to deal with their functions at a later stage.[2]

The humblest of the village officials is the *godet'*, the bailiff and messenger of the headman. When a child is born or a villager dies, it is the *godet'* who carries the news to all the houses. If it becomes necessary to summon the men of the village to a council to announce the near approach of a marriage party, or to collect dues from the houses for a feast in connection with a festival, it is the *godet's* duty to see that it is done. He is the errand boy, and consequently something of a butt for the wit of the village, as the following song (sung during the *Sohrae* festival) bears witness:

> Here comes the headman walking slowly,
> And here comes his deputy with wooden sandals,
> And also the *godet'* calling out to everyone.
>
> Put out a woven bed for the headman to sit on,
> Put out a wooden stool for his deputy,
> And put out for the *godet'* a broken bed.
>
> Pour out for the headman the first brew of beer,
> Pour out for his deputy the second brew,
> Pour out for the *godet'* the leavings.
>
> Give to the headman cakes of sifted flour,
> Give to his deputy some coarser cakes,
> And give to the *godet'* the lumpy bits.[3]

[1] See Appendix B, No. 1.
[2] See Appendix B, No. 2.
[3] See Chapter 7

5: Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

On the evening before the appointed day the village bailiff delivers the sacrificial hens, two white hens and one brown, to the priest's house. The priest observes his customary abstinence during that night, sleeping on the bare floor. Next morning the bailiff makes a collection of one hen from each house in the village, together with rice, salt and the various spices that are needed to cook a curry. It is the duty of the priest's wife to grind the flour that will be needed for "cakes"; his sister may perform this work only if she is unmarried. In the morning the priest constructs the sacred squares and circles on a piece of ground previously plastered with cowdung. The sacrifices are performed at noon, and these are in some cases offered in the sacred grove, but in some villages they are offered by the side of a stream or on the bank of one of the artificial lakes that abound. The sacred place is made from north to south, as in the case of the Flower festival, and the procedure is the same. First of all rice is sprinkled in the enclosures and some vermilion is placed on the rice. The birds are fed on the rice, water is sprinkled over them, and vermilion is smeared on their heads, their wings and their legs. When the sacrifice is complete, the priest eats the flesh of the heads, while the men of the village feast on a hash made from the rest of the flesh, and drink and sing.

The distinctive feature of the sacrifice is that, before the hens are offered, an egg is placed standing upright on a small pile of rice in one of the squares, and all the herdboys of the village are summoned to bring the cattle. The priest places vermilion on their goad sticks, and they drive their cattle across the enclosure in which the egg is standing until one of the cattle tramples upon and breaks the egg. This is the signal for an outburst of cheering and excitement. The cow or bull is garlanded and anointed with vermilion on its horns and its head. Sometimes the boy is carried shoulder high to the village headman, before whom he makes a deep obeisance, afterwards saluting the other men of the village. When the villagers return to the houses in the late afternoon they are supplied with beer in the priest's house, after which they visit the headman's house for the same purpose, and so on from one house to another. It is at this time that the youths and young women visit the home of the *jogmaṅjhi* and request him to turn a blind eye to their doings for the duration of the festival. The whole period is characterized by its freedom from traditional morality. The rules of avoidance are treated lightly, and many liberties are taken with members of the opposite sex.

St Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

58 852 been a second marriage, and as they were extremely poor their plea to set up house together had been allowed and the marriage celebration that had been postponed was indefinitely suspended. The time came when they wished to arrange a marriage for their eldest son and they found themselves involved in a difficulty. Until the formal celebration of their own marriage had taken place their son could not marry because in its absence they could not carry out the *caco chaṭiar* of their boy. The problem was solved by going through one of the permitted forms of marriage themselves, after which on the same day they performed the initiation of their three sons. They were scolded by the villagers who gathered for the occasion, but again pleaded their poverty.

852 574 The whole of the population of the village is invited for the ceremony, and each person must at the very least be given two cups of beer for each child on whose behalf the ceremony is being held. The feast for the whole village is not practicable except for a very few, and it is regarded as sufficient if the village officials are presented with a meal of rice and meat or chicken curry. If possible, the midwife who presided at the birth of the children bathes them in the courtyard by pouring water over them; and if she cannot, this is done by one of the old women present. [538] Water is also sprinkled over the assembled guests. The *jog-māṇjhi* [624] recites the myth of Santal origins; beginning from the account of the creation of the world and the founding of the clans, he brings the story up to date by leading to the birth of the children in the particular family with which the villagers are at [535] that moment concerned. Then there follows a dance in the courtyard, and songs are sung in honour of the family. The event [533] is neither preceded nor followed by any period of instruction. [184] Such materials as exist for comparing the institution in different parts of the Santal country suggest that possibly its observance is of greater importance in the north, particularly in the Santal 114 Parganas. Bodding has described the ceremony, basing his 852 account on the published Santali account of the traditions.[1] Recently a long and full account of the ceremonial has been published in Santali, and this account comes from the same area but does not include a description of an actual observance.[2] On the other hand, Mr. C. L. Mukherjea's account of Santal culture to the extreme south in the state of Mayurbhanj[3] omits all

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 132]

[1] P. O. Bodding, *Santali Dictionary*, Vol. I, p. 443.
[2] Stephen H. Murmu, *Kuṛam ar Caco Chaṭiar*, Dumka, 1945.
[3] C. L. Mukherjea, *The Santals*, Calcutta, 1943.

St Culshaw M-S (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

585 If the distance between the two villages be great, the party of the bridegroom will have arrived on the outskirts of the bride's village on that evening and are accommodated in a special shelter for the night. They do not enter the village, but at the first sign of approaching morning the go-between comes from the bridegroom's camp, bringing with him a small quantity of the oil and turmeric left over from the bridegroom's anointing, and with this the bride is once more anointed.

585 574 [624] Meanwhile the bridegroom's party make ready to approach the bride's house. The *jogmañjhi* and *godet*[1] of the village meet them at the end of the village street, where they are asked to wait awhile. Mats are placed for them to sit on and they are given tobacco to smoke. The bridegroom's party always enter a village from the west end and leave from the east end. The officials who greet the party are accompanied by a band of young folk from the village who sing and dance and who in the course of their songs make insulting remarks about the bridegroom and the village from which he comes. These insults are expected and have to be accepted in good part. When they at length set out for the bride's house, the bridegroom is carried by a woman who lifts him and carries him on her hip as she would a child. On first arriving at the bride's home, some of her friends pretend that the bridegroom is not properly groomed, so they proceed to shave him again with a leaf for a mirror and a rough piece of wood for [606] a razor. When he greets his future father-in-law he places a necklace round his neck while his father-in-law winds a turban cloth round his head, after which they sprinkle water over each other [276] with a spray of mango leaves. They exchange *pan*[1] and embrace 585 each other. When the bride is brought out of the house she is carried in the same way as the bridegroom, and first of all they sprinkle sun-dried rice over each other (this is called "sowing" the rice), and follow it by sprinkling water with the sprays of mango leaves. The bride is seated in a basket and made to face the west, while the bridegroom faces towards the east. Then he takes from a small wooden box that is wrapped in his waistband the vermilion which he proceeds to place on the bride's head, and as he does so the assembled company make the air [177] resound with shouts of "*Horibol*". This is sheer Hinduism, for it is the invocation of Hari, one of the names of Vishnu the Saviour. The bridegroom helps the bride down from the basket, places an

[1] The leaf of the *Piper betle*, L., rolled with lime, the nut of the areca palm and other spices wrapped inside it. Rarely eaten by Santals except on ceremonial occasions, but very generally used by others in Bengal.

St Culshaw M-8 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

CHAPTER 12

DEATH

It is far easier to describe the actions of the Santals in the face of death than to reduce their beliefs concerning death and the destiny of man's soul to any system. Under the stress of bereavement the behaviour of the men is stoical, in somewhat marked contrast to the behaviour of the majority of the peoples among whom they live. The women, however, give full vent to the expression of their grief and voice their lamentations in words that are poetical in form and content. As soon as a death has occurred, preparations are made for the burning. Cremation is the almost universal rule, although there are certain significant exceptions. Children who die before puberty are buried with little ceremony in shallow graves on the edge of the forest, and though thorns are placed over the grave to protect the body from wild animals, such graves are often disturbed. Men and women who have died from certain diseases are buried in the same manner, a fact that accounts for the often unsavoury condition of the patch of jungle that adjoins the compound of the Mission Hospital at Sarenga. This is particularly true of those who die from tuberculosis, which is known to the Santals as *khok' ajar*, or "cough fever", and leprosy, which is called the "great disease". When deaths occur in the village from these causes or from some other infectious disease such as smallpox, the living avoid contact with the dead bodies as far as possible. The body of the dead person is fastened to a rude stretcher made with *sarjom* saplings, and the stretcher is then yoked to a pair of bulls which drag it out of the village. There the body is left after a token burial with a few handfuls of earth, and the task of corpse disposal is left to the vultures and jackals. In some villages burial is the custom because of the difficulty of obtaining sufficient firewood.

In the usual course of events the *godet'* goes through the village calling on every house to contribute its share of the wood for the burning. From each house one of the men takes a stick for the burning to the bereaved home, while one of the women takes along a small amount of oil and turmeric for anointing the body, and, if the dead person be a married woman, some vermilion in addition. When all have gathered, the corpse is washed and rubbed all over with the oil and turmeric; in the case of a married woman fresh vermilion is put on her forehead and in